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*History and Functions of Central Labor Unions.* By WILLIAM MAXWELL BURKE, Ph. D. Pp. 125. Price, \$1.00. New York: The Macmillan Company, for Columbia University, 1899.

Volume XII, No. 1, of the Columbia Studies in History, Economics and Public Law is a readable monograph upon one corner of a field which has never been very deeply plowed in any of its parts. The monograph presents in an interesting way the picture of a great factor in the labor movement—central labor unions—and the few small mistakes contained in the book are due to the great area covered.

In the first chapter, Mr. Burke gives a concise sketch of the general history of labor federations in Great Britain and the United States. His attempt to define "amalgamations," "federations" and "affiliations" only goes to show how useless it is to try to put popular, general terms into definite language. Chapter II takes up the real object of the monograph by giving an account of the history and organization of central labor unions in this country. Chapter III explains the objects and principles of these unions. Thus far the study is open to little criticism, because it is mostly a summary of the official publications of labor organizations. But in chapters IV and V, where the author deals with "political action and socialism" and "the future of central labor unions," there is room for controversy. The subject is so new that the author's evident care in preparation will help those who have not already done so to form an opinion. The work will also inspire a greater respect for organized labor.

The central labor union is defined as a federation of unions, not necessarily allied as to trade. These unions generally have jurisdiction over the territory occupied by a city or, at most, a county. "City Federation," "Trades Alliance," "Trades Council," "Workingmen's Union," "Workingmen's Assembly," "Trade and Labor Alliance," etc., are synonymous with "Central Labor Union." Both the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor encourage the formation of these central labor bodies, because by means of them the population centres become the strong units which make up the general labor movement.

As the author suggests, the books referring to the subject are very few. He might have added that they are also very inaccurate without having to fear that his statement was libelous. For instance, the citation of Ely's "Labor Movement in America" is no proof that the New York Society of Journeymen Shipwrights, founded in 1803, was the first local union in America. Even from a secondary source-book like Wright's "Industrial Evolution," it may be seen that the Philadelphia Association of Journeyman Shoemakers was already active in the

years 1792, '96, '98 and '99. The association "struck" for increases and against decreases of wages, and, later, became mixed up with conspiracy laws in a way that would fill any modern, self-respecting trade union with envy. It might also be said, as another instance, that the Philadelphia Typographical Society, whose descendent lives to-day, was founded in 1802, and sent \$83 to help the New York printers through a yellow-fever epidemic in 1803. Other mistakes occur, as for example, when the author says, ". . . where special industries are localized, men of other allied trades (*i. e.*, other than the building and printing trades) are numerous enough to form similar organizations, but nowhere are there such unions of the textile trades, or of the iron trades, or the boot and shoe trades." And yet there is in existence a "Metal Trades Council," of New York, which sent a telegram of instruction on ship-subsidy resolutions to its representative at the last convention of the American Federation of Labor. And there is a Philadelphia "Textile Association," which sends a lobby to the state legislature. Again, it is not a fact that the Cleveland, O., central body is the only one in the United States with a paid "business agent."

The monograph has a good table of contents, but unfortunately no index. As a book of information, it will supply food for the trade unionist and for the lay thinker. It contains forcible and convincing statements in regard to waste of time in the unions, use of labor organizations by politicians, effect of public opinion, use of blackmail, variations in the practices of different cities, the labor press, collective bargaining and legislation. But when the much-mooted question of political action is discussed, the author, skillful as he may be, treads on slippery ground, and his work shows it. At times also his statements have an *ex cathedra* tone. "There is but one side, until the other is heard."

HENRY JOHN NELSON.

*Philadelphia.*

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*Elementary Principles of Economics.* By CHARLES H. CHASE. Pp. xvi, 405. Price, \$1.25. Chicago: Chas. H. Kerr & Co., 1899.

Judge Chase has dedicated his *Elementary Economics* to the youth of the United States of America. It should have been dedicated to the economists. The volume is one which will be of value to teachers of political economy, but it is peculiarly unfitted in many respects to serve as an elementary text-book or as an introduction to the subject for the general reader.